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Astan Quds Razavi

M. Reza Atai

HESHAM -ibn- HAKAM

Translated by

M. HASHEM

Hesham ibn Hakam

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Foreword

The present book which is in the hands of our esteemed readers, is a translation of "Hesham ibn Hakam" written by the honourable writer Hujjatol Islam Muhammad Reza Atai, who has also written and translated many works which have been published in the recent years.

This is a superb book to introduce the readers to the champions and the assistants to the Imamate and the cause of Wilayah. This condensed book should be published in English, Urdu and other languages to assist the seekers of knowledge in their search for information regarding their religious champions.

We believe the translation, publication and distribution of Islamic literature to foreign countries where there is a lack of Islamic information, will be a great service to the Islamic world.

We feel obliged to extend our thanks and gratitude to Mr. Muhammad Hashem, a member of the translation department, and all other colleagues who have tried their best in editing and preparing the text for publication. We wish them success in promoting Islamic culture.

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Introduction

The mechanical life has taken the blessings away from many things, especially from time and life. In our days, there is no one who lives a natural life, and does not leave this world by natural death and does not make the most of the opportunities available during his short secular life. There are very few people who make the most of those opportunities and use every minute of their time collecting intellectual benefits. Most of our time is devoted to worldly matters, and opportunities are wasted for the sake of the material objectives. Most of our thoughts rotate around the axis of economy. Our general goal is to attain worldly pleasure. Human feelings have become the captive of desire and personal passion and everything is at the disposal of human lust!

Really, how the years of life are spent so uselessly and rapidly; opportunities flee without benefit so swiftly! In the past, when human beings travelled on horses and camels, Amirul Mu'mineen Ali [a] used to comment on the importance of time and the lapse of opportunities as follows: "Make the most of your opportunities as they pass away swiftly like the pieces of a cloud."

Today human beings are really puzzled when they examine the developments and speeds of the modern means of transportation. They do not know to which things in the past to compare these modern developments with. For this reason the elite and learned men are of the opinion that today, people do not have sufficient time to read long stories and voluminous books. Therefore, the storywriters and biographers try to summarize their attempts and write as concisely as they can. According to them, the characteristic of a good story is that it should be short and brief. People are tired. They have no patience and time, especially for the study of the accounts of a human life. The study of the biographies of great heroes and distinguished men and the study of their time periods and the acknowledgement of the truth and reality of their features is very necessary for everyone in the present circumstances. This is especially true when haste and impatience are epidemic. On the other hand, it is the cherished wish of every seeker of the real path and code of life to know about the blazing and glorious heroes of knowledge and faith. Therefore, it is very necessary to provide short accounts of the lives of the champions of Islam to our young generation as models.

The First University of Shi'a

Undoubtedly, the second half of the second century of Hijra has been a critical chapter in the history of Islam. At a time when Abbasids and Umayyads were tearing each other apart like wild beasts to take the reins of the Islamic dynasty into their own hands and like vultures, they were attacking each other on the corpse of khilafat, the so-called Islamic one, the true leaders grasped the suitable opportunity to expand the realities of Islam and propagate the Qur'anic teachings. Two of our exalted Imams took the most advantage of these opportunities.

The fifth Imam Hazrat Baqerul Ulum (the analyzer of science) [a] laid the foundation of a university and prepared the way in such a manner that all interested people were attracted there and all seekers of knowledge gathered around to acquire different sciences from all over the world. Similarly, our 6th Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad [a] could teach thousands of capable persons in the different fields of arts and sciences and introduced the Shi'a Ja'fary sect to the world. Actually he presented the real outlook of Islam to the people of the world because the realities of Islam were changed completely during the caliphate of Umayyads and Marwans. This was due to the improper acts of the caliphs and the people were bewildered and puzzled.

Numbers of Students

Shaikh Toosi has mentioned the total number of the followers of Imam al-Baqer [a] as 484 persons and the total number of the students of Imam al-Sadiq [a] as 3197 men and 12 women, in his book *Rijal* (the biographies of the transmitters of the prophetic traditions). It is obvious that these numbers refer only to those persons whose names are individually mentioned in different books or are famous. Otherwise, there were many others who were not famous or their names were not mentioned and have been forgotten. The learned men have written about the numbers of the students and those who flourished under Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [a] as two thousand persons, just in the great Mosque of Kufa alone who used to come and listen to his lectures. Therefore, the number of students should be more than this in all other centres and towns.

In fact, each of these liberal men is a burning candle and a shining star. So to have the knowledge and information about the life of each of them is a must for every Muslim because their lives are marked by bravery and chivalry. Undoubtedly, every one can change his mode of life and can rediscover the real path of life by reading the stories of their lives.

So our aim is to manifest the biography of the youngest man of this group of great personalities along with some of his adventurous acts - the perfect man, the pupil of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [a] namely Hesham ibn Hakam. We want to present one of the greatest champions of Islam to the young generation. Maybe we can learn a lesson from the story of his continuous efforts in the path to reach the target and his unparalleled devotion to defending the cause of Wilayah (trusteeship).

Who is Hesham?

Hesham is one of the best scholars and authorities of Islam. He was famous for his knowledge and virtue among the learned men of his time. He was a genius and a gifted improviser and due to his good sense of taste and capability he used to be victorious over all of his rivals in debate and speech; the champion who was never defeated. The man whose tongue was sharper than a sword. Indeed, he is recognized as one of the greatest champions and the most distinguished supporters of Wilayah (trusteeship). It was Hesham who originally put the topics of Imamate and Wilayah (trusteeship) forward on the basis of wisdom and logic; and he proved himself to be fully competent for this task.

Abu Muhammad or Abul Hakam Hesham ibn Hakam Kendi

Although most of the writers have written his name as Hesham ibn Hakam and they know him as the son of "Hakam", an inhabitant of Kufa, in some of the books written by modern writers,[1] the name of his father has been mentioned as Yazid. According to this source Hesham had a brother who was one of the Hadith relaters. His brother had two sons and one daughter; and one of those two sons was very famous in the field of rhetoric. Most of the writers have mentioned Kufa as Hesham's birthplace; so he is known as Hesham ibn Hakam from Kufa. Some mention Baghdad and a few name Waset, near Basra as his birth place. Perhaps this mistake occurred because Hesham passed his early life in Waset and a part of his life in Baghdad.

There is a dispute regarding his descent also. Some have mentioned him as "Maula Bani-Kandah"[2] or "Maula Bani Shayban".[3] As the term "Maula" was used for non-Arabs, so it means that he did not belong to an Arab race. Some think him to be descended from Bani-Khazaya[4]- the largest Arab tribe. Then there would be no doubt that he belongs to an Arab race.

The exact year of the birth of Hesham is also not written in any book, but we understand from different sources that he was born in Kufa,[5] the centre of Iraqi's Shi'as, in the beginning of the second century of Hijra. He passed a part of his childhood in Waset and grew up there. Afterwards he lived a few years in Baghdad in the Karkh area where he was conducting some business.

Notes:

[1] Hesham ibn Hakam- written by: Ahmad Safai, P.14.

[2] "Rejal"- by Abu 'Amr Kashi

[3] "One of the Mawalis of Bani Sheiban, and inhabitant of Baghdad". Al- Fehrist Ibn Nadim.

[4] "Hesham ibn al-Hakam" by Abdullah Na'mah, quoted from - Ketab - Ta'sis al- Shia by Syed Sadr.

[5] Hesham ibn Hakam - by Ahmad Safai, pg.1O.

The Business Activities of Hesham

It is clear by studying the biography of Hesham that he not only acquired knowledge, fought for the cause of religion and conducted campaigns and debates against the infidels and unbelievers in Wilayah (trusteeship), but also he was active in the business of selling fabrics. As Hesham himself states: One day while he was busy selling the Saberi[7] fabric under a shaded tree, the seventh Imam Musa ibn Ja'far [a] happened to ride by. He turned his face to me and said, "O Hesham, selling something in the shadows is similar to cheating, and cheating is unlawful in Islam."[8]

[7] A Kind of delicate and costly silk which was woven in those days in Sabur, Persia, and it was very difficult to distinguish the complete characteristics of that cloth in darkness and shadow.

[8] Al Fehrist of Ibn Nadim Hassan, a poet during the time of the Prophet [s] whose odes including "Ghadirieh", are famous.

Characteristics of Hesham

Hesham enjoyed the special favour of the Imams [a]. Those distinguished remarks which have been quoted in the books of great writers in praise of Hesham have not been quoted regarding any other person. The 6th Imam [a] has prayed for him and said:

"Hesham, I have said about you that very thing which the Prophet [s] said about Hassan [a] May the Holy spirit assist you always as long as you assist us by the help of your tongue (speech)."[9] Imam al-Sadiq [a] said, "Hesham is the protector of our cause (right) and the annihilator of the babbling and idle speeches of our enemies. To follow him is just like following us and likewise to be at enmity with him is like being at enmity with us."[10]

One day the Imam said to Hesham, "O Hesham, discuss and argue about religious topics and problems. I am so glad that a person like you were among our Shi'as."[11] Sulaiman ibn Ja'far has narrated when people asked Imam Reza [a] about Hesham, he replied, "May God bless him; he was a benevolent fellow. His fellowmen envied and insulted him."[12]

Hesham, from the very beginning of his life as a Shi'a, was favoured by the Shi'a leaders; all followers of the Prophet's household respected him. The Prophet's household and the religious leaders looked upon him with respect and honour.

[9] Wasail al-Shiah by Sheikh Horr Ameli, vol. 2. Pg. 2O8.

[10] Ma'alem al-Ulama, by Ibn Shahr Ashob.

[11] "Hazarah e Tousi = Millenery of Tousi", vol. 2. P.142.

[12] Tanqih al-Maqal by Mamghani

Remarks of the Scholars Regarding Hesham

"Hesham ibn Hakam was one of the greatest followers of Imam al-Sadiq [a] and a pious man and an expert on Islamic laws."[13]

Hesham was one of the closest helpers of the 6th Imam [a] and the 7th Imam and had discourses with his opponents on the basic principles and the other religious matters. He was alive for sometime even after the death of the 7th Imam [a].[14]

"Hesham is respected and of a high rank and reliable in quoting Hadith (tradition)".[15]
"There was a group of brilliant students of the Holy Family and Shi'a Imams who were outstanding in speculative theology (Ilm-Kalam) due to their skilfulness, proficiency and reasoning power like Hesham ibn Hakam and..."[16]

Hesham has many writings, discourses and books on the topics of Imamate and speculative theology. The contemporary scholars of Hesham have counted him as the greatest defender of "Wilayah" (trusteeship) and the honour of Shi'a (i.e. eye and face). The "eye of the Shi'a" (Ain-al-Taefe) in the sense that he was a watchful and vigilant protector against the deeds of the opponents. He did not neglect the smallest impudent act of the opponents against the exalted rank of "Wilayah" and did not leave even the least objections unreplied against "Imamate".

He was called "the face of Shi'a" (i.e. Wajh-al-Taefe) in the sense that anyone from among the opponents of the Shi'a who used to confront him either surrendered, converted or became fearful and refused to discuss and argue with him. Hesham used to say, "I wonder why the opponents of the Shi'a chose the man as caliph whose dismissal came from heaven and dismiss the man whose appointment came from heaven; and quoted the story of the verse Bara'at for justification."[17]

[13] Sheikh Mufid, Tanqih al-Maqal- quoted from the writings of Marhum Majlisi.

[14] Khalesah by Allamah Helli.

[15] "Rejal" by Sheikh Tousi.

[16] A'yan a-Shiah by Allamah Syed Mohsen Amili, Part 2. Vol. 1. P.6.

[17] Fehrist Ibn Nadim - (Hesham has indicated in his speech that after the inspiration of the verses of the chapter Barayat, (Immunity) the Prophet should first hand them to Abubakr to take to Mecca and recite at the Hajj gathering. And then by the order of God, Prophet (s.a.w.) was to take the verses back from him and give them to Amir al-Mu'minen, who then took the verses to Mecca and recited them during the Hajj season.

Victorious Champion

Hesham, like many others, was fond of virtue and excellence and thirsty for knowledge from the vast ocean of Imam's wisdom [a]. He used to perform Hajj every year and he used to pay a visit to the 6th Imam [a] or his beloved son, the 7th Imam [a] at Mecca or Madina. He benefited greatly from these two honourable personalities and returned very much successful. So it was this very acquired knowledge that gave him strength at the time of debate against his opponents and made him always victorious.

That very year the Imam [a] was at the place of sacrifice and there were groups of learned pupils and famous scholars around him like: Hamran ibn Ain Shaybani. Ghais ibn Maser, Yunus ibn Yaqub and Abu Ja'far Ahwal (Momen Tagh) and a number of other Shi'a brave men who were encircling the Imam [a] like a precious stone around a ring. Hesham, who was still very young, entered Mina and presented himself to Imam al-Sadiq [a].

Imam [a] held Hesham extraordinarily dearer to himself than others. Then because he thought that this excessive honouring might annoy the others present there, Imam al-Sadiq [a] said:

"This young man assists and defends our cause with all of his strength (i.e. with his heart, hand and tongue)."

Then to prove the special intellectual position of Hesham, Imam al-Sadiq [a] asked him a few questions regarding the Exalted Divine names (of Allah) and the formation of names relating to the creator's attributes. Hesham replied to them all correctly and very eloquently and clearly. Then Imam al-Sadiq [a] said:

"O Hesham, God has bestowed this versatility and farsightedness upon you because you must repel the evil acts of our enemies."

Then he prayed to God for him and said:

"May God reward you for your knowledge and make your foot firm in the path, of God and our way of guidance.

After that, it was due to this blessing bestowed by the Imam [a] that Hesham was always victorious like a champion over his enemies in discourses. He used to say always that he

achieved this power in himself and felt a holy light due to the blessing of Imam [a]. "By God, till this day when I am standing here, nobody has defeated me in religious discourses."

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Witticism of Hesham

The respected scholar Syed Mohsen Jabal Amili (God bless him) writes in his valuable book *A'yan al Shi'a* that too many eulogies have been quoted by the two Imams (the 6th Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad and the 7th Imam [a] about Hesham. Then he adds: It is enough to say regarding Hesham's readiness to answer and his impromptu speeches, that one day people asked him whether Mu'awiyah was present in the Battle of Badr or not? He replied quickly: Yes, but on the other side. That is, he was present but was among the opponents and a member of the enemy's army.

Books of Hesham

Hesham is the first man who discussed and deliberated the fundamentals of beliefs and topic of leadership in the Islamic world on the basis of the scientific point of view. He wrote books on those topics and opened the way for research and debate for the coming generations. By using rational and traditional reasoning in his speeches and writings, he made the sublime goal and the benefit of the Shi'a school clear for the other Muslims and foreign scholars. Hesham had many books on different scientific fields but unfortunately, today there is nothing left except their names written in the books. Ibn Nadeem and a group of other great writers have counted his books to be about thirty volumes. Allamah Helli writes: Hesham has compiled a book against dualists and separatists and another book against "Aristotle", "Shaikh and the Slave" and "Eight Chapters" were among his books.

The Founder of the Science of the Fundamentals of Religion

The late Allamah Syed Mohsen Amili, the writer of *A'yan al Shi'a* says: Hesham has written the book- *Al-Alfaz*. So the statement of Jalaluddin Seuti: that the first writer of the fundamentals of Muslim laws, according to the consensus of scholars, is Shafei, "is not correct, because Hesham b. Hakam has been living a very long time before him. Moreover to emphasize this point it is known that Imam al-Baqer [a] and Imam al-Sadiq [a] used to teach the complete and useful rules of this science from the chapters of etymological arguments and rational proofs to their pupils and followers. A group of scholars have also compiled a few books regarding the traditions quoted from the holy Imams on this very topic.

Furthermore, the respected Allamah also mentions the names of some of the great scholars to prove that Hesham is the first man who has written books on the topic of the science of the fundamentals of speculative theology. Hesham was well informed of the different topics of the fundamentals. Beliefs, philosophical (Divine Metaphysics) discourses and Muslim laws. He was also well-versed in argumentation about the Creator, unity of God, attributes of His Glory and Beauty and God's will. He was expert at reasoning for Imamate (leadership) and Wilayah, knowledge, chastity, all other qualities of the Imams and also regarding miracles and unusual actions of those pious men. He was well acquainted with the Qur'an, the words of God and the discussion on free will and freedom of human beings. Likewise, he was well versed in the topics of the atom and metaphysics, the materiality of some matter, the reality of human beings, cause of earthquakes, rain and etc., in natural philosophy.

Unfair Accusations

The sensational life and ramming debates of Hesham are known to us and we also know that his decisive speech was just like a sharp sword, but sometimes, he had to use dissimulation in his speeches to save himself from attack by the unjust people and also to get rid of tyrants. So his speeches had double meanings and as a result the enemies used to keep quiet but his short sighted friends could not understand the reality of his speeches. So people either being aware or unaware of the fact, have accused Hesham unfairly. Thus, according to Allamah Syed Mohsen Amili, (May God bless him), these accusations were due to some well-wishing as he says: "This was like making a hole in the ship (as Khidr [a] did in the story of the Qur'an) i.e. for the good reasoning."[18]

The learned scholar Mr. Atarodi Ghochani writes: "The shallow narrators and flimsy opponents have unfairly accused Hesham of having beliefs contrary to the ideas of the Qur'an whereas he is the first person who has spoken about the Imamate. And Imam al-Sadiq [a] was extraordinarily attached to him and preferred him over all of his followers.[19]

Then he adds: "Sunni scholars have blamed him (Hesham) for infidelity and dualism and have made unfair accusations against him. However, the Shi'a scholars have given replies to all those unfair accusations and cleared his sacred personality from all those unfair accusations." [20]

He writes in another place: "Shahristani has mentioned a particular sect namely Heshamiyah in his book - al-Melal wa-Nahal- and has counted them as the followers of Hesham-bin-Hakam. He says that this belief of Shahristani has no genuine source and is only a mere accusation. Shahristani has taken his information from the long-time enemies and opponents of Hesham. So for this reason his writings have no value and the sacred personality of Hesham is free from any unfair blame."[21]

Abu Mansur Abdul Qaher Baghdadi has blamed Hesham for believing in the corporeality of God and writes clearly that he believes in the corporeality of God.[22]

In reply to these accusations, Syed Murtaza known as 'Alamul Huda, notes that: "this famous sentence 'God is corporeal but not like other corporal bodies' which Hesham has been accused of saying, has been interpreted in different ways." For example, Hesham was debating with Mo'atazalah group and to defeat them Hesham used their own phraseology. Hesham said to

them that suppose you are of the opinion that God is a (material) thing but not like any other things; then you must say He is a body but not like other bodies.[23]

The writer of the book - *al-Melal wan-Nahal* - has also confirmed this matter, when he writes that Hesham has used this phrase during his debates with the group of Ghulat (exaggerators).[24] Some others have also accused Hesham, saying that he had no belief in the knowledge of God about the happenings and accidents of the future, i.e., Hesham was of the opinion that the knowledge of God about accidental matters is also accidental and His knowledge is apart from His Essence.

The late Syed Murtaza also writes concerning this: The story of the knowledge of God regarding the accidents and happenings is also a creation of Hesham's enemies and is nothing but a condemnation as in this matter there is nothing in the records; neither from Hesham's own works nor has any other reliable and trustworthy person quoted such things regarding him.[25]

In the same manner, he is blamed for the matter of the visibility of God on the Day of Judgement. As according to the apparent meaning of some of the Qur'anic verses, it is said that the Creator would be seen in corporeal form. So this is also one of the accusations directed against his sacred personality. But the fact is that in the beginning of his career, Hesham was the disciple of Abu Shaker Deisani - the learned materialist. Later on he was for a time one of the followers of Jahm b. Safwan - the fatalist and was also one of his disciples. But the research authorities do not approve of the idea: that if the master deviates from the true path, the disciple will also deviate from it. Secondly, for a seeker of truth and a researcher of reality, this process of philosophical evolution and transformation of ideas was vital and necessary for his intellectual and spiritual development. For this reason we must not accuse Hesham of deviation and we must not find fault with him. Rather all of this reveals Hesham's evolutionary philosophical endeavour and inclination towards righteousness. Moreover, some writers have recorded that he associated with Deisani in his early life, before he reached the threshold of Wilayah (trusteeship) and met with Imam al-Sadiq [a].

[18] It refers to the story of the meeting of Moses [a] and Khidhr [a] and how they became travel companions. After sitting in the ship, Khidhr [a] started to make holes in the ship. Although it was agreed upon that Moses [a] would not interfere in the work of Khidhr [a] he began to object. Anyhow, Khidhr [a] explained his good intention in doing so and said that a tyrant king usurped the ships from its owners by force at the shore, and this belonged to a group of faithful labourers. I wanted to make a hole in it so that the ship might not attract the king and he would not usurp it from the owners. (Holy Qur'an. Cave 18:60)

[19] Life of Abdul Azim Hasani, chapter, on gnostics and teachers, Pg. 2O2.

[20] Ibid. Pg. 203.

[21] Mohammad b. Abdul Karim Shahristani, the famous speculative theologian and philosopher, is one of the most learned men and philosophers of Islam. His book -Melal wal Nahal- is the most famous among the books on faiths and religions. He actually lived in the town of Sharistan, situated in the north of Khorasan which is now a part of Dargaz. He also died there. According to Yaqut Hamavi, Shahristan was a town in the vicinity of Nesa, and had an unfavourable climate and a large number of people used to die of the plague there every year. Muhammad ibn Abdul Karim was an inhabitant of that place.

[22] Abu Mansour Abdul Qaher ibn Taher Baghdadi (d. 429), writer of the book- Al Farq Bain al-Feraq. In the same way in the book - Melal wal Nahal of the Zaidi sect, learned scholar AI-Imam Ahmad ibn Yahya b. al-Murtaza, has also quoted this: - Hesham ibn Hakam and Hesham Javalighi and all shias except for a small group of them like the sect of Abi al-Ahvas Moatazali believe in the corporeality of God. As you see, this writer has announced with the utmost injustice, Hesham and all other Shia groups as Mojassamah (believers of the corporeal body of God) and Moshabbaha (believers in the similarity of God to other beings). What an injustice!!!

[23] Al-Shafi written by Syed Murtaza (regarding the remedying of the taunt against Hesham, the interested may please refer to vol.13 of Usul Kafi Pg. 337, Raudhat al-Kafi Pg. 379. Commentaries of Sha'rani).

[24] "Ghulat"- pl. of Ghali, means a group of people who believe in Amirul Mu'mineen as God. (Amid. Persian Dictionary).

[25] Al Shafi by Syed Murtaza.

The First Meeting of Hesham with Imam [a]

Hesham's first meeting and contact with the light of Wilayah, Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad [a], happened after an evolution through different religions and the deep deliberation of the philosophical schools and also the compilation of his book - *Refutation of Aristotle*. It is quoted that he was first introduced to the Imam [a] by his uncle, Umar ibn Yazid ibn Zebyan. [26] This meeting was arranged by him. Umar ibn Yazid, who was himself a follower of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [a] says:

"From the beginning Hesham, my brother's son was the follower of Jahm ibn Safvan, one of the leaders of the Mo'atazalah sect and also one of the followers of the Jahamiyah sect.[27] He was a young, witty and impudent person. He had heard about the attributes of the Imam [a]. One day, he requested me to present him to Imam al-Sadiq [a] to have a discussion with him (Imam [a]). As I was aware that Hesham was bold and rude, I said:

"I would not do this without his permission."

Then I visited the Imam [a] and asked his permission for Hesham's visit. The Imam said: "Let him come".

After I went a few steps away from the house of the Imam [a] I remembered Hesham's audacity and meanness. I said to myself perhaps Hesham might speak impertinently in the presence of the Imam, so I returned and said (to the Imam):

"Hesham is such and such."

The Imam said: "O Umar, perhaps you are afraid of the meeting of Hesham with me."

I became ashamed of myself and understood that I had made a big mistake. Embarrassed I came out of the Imam's house and told Hesham to go to the Imam [a].

When Hesham entered, he asked about his own problems and difficult matters and he received their correct answers.

Then the Imam [a] also asked him a few questions. But as Hesham was amazed and bewildered (due to this being the first meeting with the Imam [a]) he asked for a deadline of a

few days. He returned after a few days to the Imam but without any reply to the Imam's questions. He requested him to reply to those questions. The Imam answered all those questions and solved his problems. Again the Imam [a] asked a few more questions which were related to the invalidity of the Jahmiyah sect (until that very day Hesham was a follower of that sect). Hesham again asked for more time.

After a few days later, Hesham again asked me (Umar ibn Yazid) to go to the Imam's [a] residence and obtain permission to see him. When I went to see him (the Imam [a]) and asked for the permission, the Imam [a] told me about a place named "'Herah" and said:

"I shall be there tomorrow."

When I went to Hesham and told him about this matter, he became happy.

On the fixed day, Hesham reached there earlier than the Imam [a]. Hesham says:

"While I was waiting there, suddenly Imam al-Sadiq [a] appeared in the far distance riding on a donkey, in great show. As he came nearer and nearer, I was impressed more and more by his greatness and splendour. Then he stopped and waited for me to say something. But I was so overwhelmed by his splendour that I could not speak a word. I believed that this formidableness was from God and it was due to the respect and position which the Imam [a] had before God."

Umar ibn Yazid says:

"This was the very meeting that changed Hesham. He left his previous sect (religion) and was converted whole-heartedly to the true religion. From that time on he was always in the presence of the 6th Imam [a]." [28]

The late Mamghani writes:

"Hesham asked the Imam [a] about five hundred problems and questions in his first meeting and received correct answers for all of them. As a result he was so much enchanted by the divine greatness of the Imam [a] that as long as he was alive, he was the greatest defender of the Wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (the guardianship of the Prophet's household [a])."[29]

[26] This chapter (the first meeting) is quoted from the book - Rejal Kashi.

[27] The Moatazalah sect is affected by Jahmiyah sect and have accepted all the teachings of Jaham ibn Safwan except the Problem of Jabr (compulsion) Jamaluddin Qasemi Damishqi has mentioned the "Moatazalah" sect as one of the branches of the Jahmiyah sect, in his book

(History of al-Jahmiyah and al-Moatazalah), and has attributed most of the latest problems of the speculative theologians of Ash'ari to Jahmiyah.

[28] Rejal by Kashi.

[29] Tanghih al-Maghal by Mamghani; "Usul Kafi" vol.2. Pg. 13: all 500 problems and questions belonged to theological complications.

Debates of Hesham: Defending of Wilayah

Younus ibn Yaqub[30] says: "One day when we were in the presence of Imam al-Sadiq [a], a man from Syria entered and said, "I am a learned man and well-versed in the fields of speculative theology and Muslim jurisprudence and acquainted with religious obligations. I have come to participate in a discussion with your followers and disciples."

The Imam said: "Is your knowledge and reasoning based on the sayings of the Prophet of Islam [s] or on your own way of thinking?"

The Syrian said: "Partly it is based on my own thoughts and partly on the sayings of the Prophet [s]."

Imam said: "Then, do you count yourself as a partner in the prophethood?"

He replied: "No, it is not this way."

Imam asked. "Is obedience to you necessary as is obedience to the Prophet [s]?"

He said: "No."

Younus ibn Yaqub noted that the Imam turned his face towards him and said: "This man, prior to participating in discussion with us, was in conflict with himself and he expressed himself quite contrary to his own claim."

Again the Imam said to him: "O! Younus, you can prove yourself well against him, enter into a discussion with him!"

Younus says that he apologized and said: "O my lord, but you yourself commanded us not to participate in the discussions on theology. And you used to say: "Oh theologians! (i.e. those theologians who do not follow their arguments according to the teachings of Islam, the Prophet [s] and the Imams [a]). Don't enter into a discussion, especially one about which you have no knowledge."

Imam said: "Yes, we rebuked them but this rebuke was for those who discuss according to

their own desires, and do not obey us i.e. the pillars of truth."

Then the Imam said to me, "Go outside and whomsoever you see from among the theologians, bring them to me!"

I went out and happened to see "Hamran ibn A'yan"[31] who was well-versed in discussion and argumentation. I brought him to the Imam. Then I brought Hesham ibn Salem[32] and at last Ghais ibn Maser. According to my opinion, Ghais was the most learned man in the field of speculative theology and had learnt the art of oratory and debate from Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn [a].

It was a few days before the Hajj season. The tent of the Imam was pitched near the Masjid-al-Haram (the sacred Ka'aba Mosque), at the foot of the mountain. The Imam, while leaning on the post of the tent, was looking around. Suddenly a camel rider appeared in the distance and was moving rapidly towards us. The Imam said "I swear to the Lord of the Ka'aba, he is Hesham."

At first we thought that he was one of the children of Aqil, namely Hesham whom Imam al-Sadiq [a] loved very much. When he came nearer, we realized that he was Hesham ibn Hakam who was still very young and there was no one younger than him in that group. The Imam [a] greeted and honoured him. Then he said, "Praise to him who defends us wholeheartedly with all his power and means."

(Younus ibn Yaqub says): "At first, the Imam turned his face to Hamran and said: "Enter into a discussion with this Syrian." Hamran started the discussion but could not defeat him. Then the Imam commanded Hesham ibn Salem to debate. Hesham's discussion with that man did not end up with any positive result. The Imam then asked Ghais ibn Maser to take his turn at discussing. While Ghais was busy discussing with that Syrian, the Imam [a] briefly smiled in a pleasing way as he noticed that the Syrian was very nervous and was not a match for Ghais.

Finally, the Imam turned his face to the Syrian and said: "If you like you could also discuss with this young man - Hesham. He accepted but turned rudely towards Hesham and addressed him, "O boy! If you have anything to say about the Imamate of your Imam, tell me?" Hesham, who was very angry and shivering due to his wrath said, "O sir, has your Lord created the human beings in vain and left them without any leader and guide? Or has He paid His kind attention towards them and not left them without any Hujjat or spiritual guide, so that they would not be bewildered?"

The Syrian learned man replied: "Of course, the Kind Creator is generous towards His servants and is not neglectful of them." Hesham said, "If it is just as you say, then describe the conditions of their leadership and guidance." The Syrian replied, "God has appointed His Hujjat (Guide) for the human beings, so that they might not dispute among themselves and

not separate from each other. Rather they must love each other and come to friendly terms between themselves. The guide must explain the commandments of the Creator for them."

Hesham asked: "Who is that guide and leader?"

The Syrian replied: "The Prophet [s] of God."

Hesham said: "When the Prophet [s] left this world, who became responsible for the guidance of these people?"

The Syrian replied: "The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet."

Hesham said: "Today, it is a very long time since the death of the

Prophet [s]. Do you think the Book and the traditions alone can solve the disputes?"

He replied: "Yes, of course, they are enough and sufficient."

Hesham said: "If it is just as you say, then why do you and I dispute and why have you travelled such a long way from Syria?"

Younus ibn Yaqub says, "When their discussion came to this point, the learned Syrian put his head down and became quiet."

The Imam [a] asked him, "Why don't you speak?"

He said: "What shall I say? I have no reply. Because if I say we have no dispute, then I would be telling a lie. On the other hand, if I say: The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet [s] are enough for the solution of the problems, this would also be a false statement. This is due to the fact that it is not easy to understand the meaning of the Qur'an and the traditions. If we dispute and each of us is of the opinion that our own belief is right, then in this case what is the use of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet [s]? This discussion is not to my benefit."

Imam al-Sadiq [a] said: "Ask Hesham himself the solution to your difficult problem."

The learned Syrian turned his face towards Hesham and said:

"O Hesham, tell me yourself who is the supervisor of the deeds of the people and who is their leader? Tell me whether the Creator guides them Himself or the people are themselves responsible for their own leadership?"

Hesham replied: "Neither one of these is correct, rather the Kind Creator has appointed leaders for the people from amongst themselves. The Syrian said: "Whom has He appointed to invite the people to unity and friendship and separate the straight path from that of the wrong one, and the just from that of the unjust?"

Hesham said: "Do you mean in the time of the Holy Prophet [s] or the present time?"

The Syrian said: "The Prophet [s] during his own life was the guide of the people. What I am talking about is the present time."

Hesham, with an ocean of respect and honour, pointed towards the Imam [a] and said: "Today, the only guide for the people is this exalted and holy person in whose presence we are standing now. And the learned men come from all over the world to him to amass knowledge and virtue. It is he who with the help of immense knowledge derived from his ancestors as a heritage, makes us aware of the heavens and the earth."

The Syrian said: "How can I believe this to be so?"

Hesham replied quickly: "Ask the Imam about the future incidents of your life and the accounts of your journey."

The Syrian said: "If it is so then there will be no problem for me."

Then the 6th Imam [a] started to retell one by one, all the happenings and the details of his journey from Syria to Mecca.

The Syrian who was carefully listening to the detailed accounts given by the Imam [a] said to the Imam [a] at the end of the speech: "Whatever have you said is correct, and now I also have become a Muslim."

The Imam [a] said: "Say I have confessed to the faith. Before you were also Muslim but you followed only the mere and apparent rules and regulations of Islam regarding marriage and inheritance etc. It is now necessary to acquaint yourself with our holy family, as the reward and remuneration of God and the recompense in the other world is obtained only by following us and by accepting our leadership. And until this moment you were deprived of this blessing."

As the Syrian accepted the Imam's [a] speech and instructions he said: "I witness that only God is to be worshipped and Prophet Muhammad [s] is the Prophet sent by God. Verily you are the guardian of the Prophet [s] and his other rightful descendants."[33]

[30] Yunus ibn Yaqub, is one of the famous Hadith narrators and also one of the followers of three of the Imams: Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq [a] Imam al-Kadhem [a] and Imam Ridha [a]. Najjashi praises him and writes: He has the power of attorney from Imam Mousa b. Ja' far [a]. It is said that he is one of the thiqah (trustworthy) in Kitab Rejal Kashi and there has been a lot written about his virtues. Yunus died in the time of Imam Reza [a]. May God be pleased with him.

[31] Homam 6. Ayan Shaibani is one of the followers of Imam al-Baqir [a] and Imam al-Sadiq [a]. Shaikh has quoted that he was responsible for some of the affairs on behalf of the 6th Imam [a] and Kashi in his book Rejal, after quoting some virtues in favour of him, writes that Imam Al-Sadiq, [a] has said: Homam b. Ayan is one of the dwellers of Paradise.

[32] Hesham ibn Salem, is one of the followers of Imam al-Sadiq [a] Najjashi and Allamah have praised him and a few have taken him as one of the Usulioun (Fundamentalists). He was an inhabitant of Jozjan and lived at (in) Kufa.

[33] Translated and abridged from: Kafi - by Kulaini; (Ehtejaj Bihar al-Anwar) by Majlisi.

Hesham - The Champion with Inductive Reasoning

Hesham ibn Salem says: "One day a large gathering of disciples and followers of the 6th Imam [a] were encircling the Imam similar to the precious stone around a ring. While we were enlightening ourselves like moths from his candle of knowledge, a Syrian entered there and after paying respect (giving his salam) took a seat. Imam [a] asked: "What business do you have?"

He replied: "I have heard that you have the knowledge of everything and whoever asks you about any matter and any problem, you give the reply. So I have come to discuss with you about the diatrical marks (Sukoon - Fathah - Kasrah -Dhammah) used in the Qur'an."

Imam [a], after hearing his question and discussion, first turned his face to Hamran ibn A'yan Sheibani[34] and asked him to answer.

The Syrian said: "Sir, I wish to discuss with your good self and I will have nothing to do with Hamran."

The Imam said to him: "If you come out victorious in discussion with Hamran, it is as if you have come out victorious against me."

The Syrian accepted and started to discuss and argue with Hamran. Hamran answered all his questions. The discussion became lengthy. The Syrian became tired and helpless.

Imam [a] asked him: "How did you find Hamran?"

He replied: "He is an expert and experienced man. He replied to whatever I asked of him."

Then the Imam [a] ordered Hamran: "Now it is your turn to ask him. So put forth your questions." Hamran also posed a few questions.

Again the Syrian man said: "Sir (my lord) I wish to discuss with your good self about Arabic Etymology and grammar."

The Imam looked at Aban ibn Taghlab and ordered: "O Aban, you discuss with him." The

discussion started and the conversation became lengthy.

Again, the Syrian turned his face to Imam al-Sadiq [a] and said: "Sir, I wish to discuss with you about Islamic jurisprudence."

Imam [a] commanded Zarareh[35] to debate with him. Zarareh discussed and argued with him for sometime.

Again the Syrian turned his face to Hazrat al-Sadiq [a] and said: "I wish to discuss with you on the subject of speculative theology."

The Imam [a] ordered Momen Tagh[36] to debate with him on this subject. After a long discussion and argument, the Syrian was defeated in this debate also.

He said again: "Sir, I am inclined to discuss with your good self on the ability to perform the religious duties."

The Imam turned his face to Hamzah ibn Taiyar[37] and commanded him to answer.

Taiyar started to explain the relevant points and replied to his question.

At last, the Syrian said: "Sir, I'd like to discuss with you regarding the unity of God."

(Hesham ibn Salem) says the Imam [a] pointed at me and said: "O Hesham discuss with him. "Then, after our discussion on unity, the Syrian urged: "I want to discuss the subject of Imamate and Wilayah. The Imam [a] turned his face to Hesham ibn Hakam and said to him: "You should argue about this matter with that man."

Hesham, like an experienced champion entered this discussion and did not give his opponent any chance to speak. Hesham's logical and charming speech attracted and enchanted the Syrian so much that he became all ears. The whole time Hesham was engaged in discussion, the Syrian was whole-heartedly listening to his high and lofty style of speech just like a soulless statue.

Imam al-Sadiq [a] who was listening to this speech, smiled very gently in such a manner that his teeth were visible.

Then the Syrian returned to his senses and suddenly said. "Now I see, your intention was to make me understand that there were such remarkable persons amidst your Shi'as and followers.

The Imam said: "Yes, my intention was just that." Then the Imam [a] said: "O Syrian brother, Hamran ibn A'yan came out victorious over you by distorting the facts and using clever speech and set forth his questions to you in a suitable and proper time; and you could not reply to him.

Aban ibn Taghlab, a companion of the Imam, confused right and wrong to oust you from the combat of the debate and asked you questions to which you could not give the proper answers. But Zarareh defeated you with the help of analogy[38] and allegory.

Taiyar, another companion is just like that bird which sits sometimes and then rises up and you are just like that wingless bird which has no power to rise up after sitting down once. Hesham ibn Salem used to put questions again and again cleverly. But Hesham ibn Hakam entered the arena with reasoning and diction and argued with you by means of logical reasoning.

"O Syrian brother, God has mixed up right with that of wrong in such a way in this world that to distinguish between them is difficult for the layman. For this reason, He has sent His apostles to separate the right way from that of the wrong one. They directed the people towards the Truth and the Reality. If the right and the wrong were clear and obvious by themselves, then there was no need for leaders, divine messengers, apostles and the Imams."

When the lecture of the Imam [a] reached this point, the Syrian said: "Fortunate are those who are always in your presence."

Imam al-Sadiq [a] said: "The Apostle was always in touch with the exalted and nearest angels of God and they used to bring secret news to him from God."

The Syrian said: "Sir, is it possible for you to accept me as one of your Shi'as and followers and teach me the sciences as you teach your own disciples?"

The Imam said to Hesham: "Teach him knowledge as I like that he be among your pupils." Some of the pious and reliable men have quoted that even after the demise of Imam Imam al-Sadiq [a] people saw that Syrian coming to Hesham bearing gifts from Syria and Hesham also used to give him gifts from Iraq in turn.

[34] This story is different from that of story No. 1, and some of the learned men have also quoted both stories as they are quite different from each other.

[35] Zararah b. Ayan Sheibani, was one of the chief companions of Imam Baqir [a] and Imam Al-Sadiq [a]. He was so respected and trustworthy that Imam Al-Sadiq [a] said: If this man, Zararah did not exist my traditions would have been lost. (Rejal-Kashi, Wasa'il Shiah v.18, Monlahal Amal, v.2. Pg. 871). He also said to Yunus ibn Ammar: "Whatever Zararah

has quoted through Imam Baqir [a], it is not lawful for us to refute it. Zararah had many children and died about two months after Imam Al-Sadiq [a].

[36] Abu Ja'far Ahwal Mohammad ibn Ali No'aman, popular by the name of Momen Tagh, was from among the important friends and supporters of Imam Baqir [a] and Imam al-Sadiq [a] and got the title of - Momen Tagh - by them. Imam Al-Sadiq [a] always praised him in the gathering of people. His discussions with Zaid ibn Hasam Shaheed and Abu Hanifa are famous. He said often that he does not fear and conceal his faith due to the ardent wish for Paradise. He is the author of books and his date of death and his burial place is not known.

[37] Hamzah b. Taiyar, was an inhabitant of Kufa and a companion of Imam Al-Baqir and Imam Al-Sadiq [a]. It is enough to prove his greatness that when the news of his death reached Imam Al-Sadiq [a]. he said: May God forgive him and favour him with happiness and peace. He defended the cause of our Wilayah and defeated our enemies.

[38] Analogy is of two kinds: One is jurisprudence analogy, that is to give order from a part to part; to issue an order for a similar matter on the basis of the previous, which is forbidden in Shi'ism and the Imam has said: "Our religion is not based on analogy and the first analogist was Satan." The second is the logical analogy, that is to reason from the general to the specific. In other words, we say that as every person is moving according to his will; so Bahram is also moving as per his will.

Imam - the centre of the existing world

Younus ibn Yaqub, one of the great followers of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [a] quotes: That very year during the Hajj season we, the followers of the Imam [a] were in his presence as usual. Hamran ibn A'yan, Muhammad ibn No'man, Hesham ibn Salem, Hamzah ibn Taiyar, Momen Tagh and a few others were present. At that time Hesham ibn Hakam entered our gathering and approached the Imam [a]. Although, he was still very young, Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad [a] paid more respect to him than to any of the others present there and seated him nearer to himself than any of the other followers. However, as the Imam [a] felt that this show of respect towards him was not pleasing to others, said: "This young man (pointing at Hesham) wholeheartedly helps us with all his power, strength and arguments."

Then he said: "O Hesham, would you not tell us what happened between you and Amr ibn Obeid? And would you not disclose what you did with him and what calamity you brought upon him? Tell me the details of the story and questions you put to him and repeat everything for us."

Hesham said respectfully: "O the son of the Prophet of God, I consider your good self so much exalted and know so much about your great personality that I feel ashamed of saying something in your presence. Also my tongue has no power to say anything before you."

The Imam said: "However, we desire this of you. So you must obey and do as we say."

Now under these circumstances, Hesham decided to retell his journey to Basrah and his debate with Amr ibn Obeid and began his story like this: "I became informed that Amr ibn Obeid[39] used to sit in the Mosque of Basrah amidst the gathering of his disciples, and discuss about Imamate and Wilayah (trusteeship) and reject our Shi'a beliefs and the followers of the Prophet's household (Ahlul Bayt). This news made me unhappy and I began my journey to Basrah. As I reached Basrah on Friday, I went directly to the Mosque of Basrah. All of a sudden my eyes fell upon the huge crowd of people who encircled Amr. He had put on a black coloured silken garment which had decorated bordering and also had put on his shoulders something like a robe. People were trying to listen to him from all nooks and crannies by stretching their heads. They were posing questions and he was replying to them. I managed to find a place for myself in a corner and sat on both my knees with some trouble. Then I turned my face to Amr ibn Obeid and said: "O learned man, I have just come now and I am a stranger. Do you allow me to ask you some questions?" He allowed me. Then I began

my questions as follows:

Do you have eyes?

My son, what sort of a question is this which you ask of me!

There is no need to ask some thing which you are seeing yourself!

All my questions are like this.

Ask my son, however much your questions may be foolish.

I would ask provided you reply to my all questions whatever they might be.

Very well, ask!

Do you have eyes?

Yes.

What do you do with your eyes?

I see colours and figures.

Do you have a nose?

Yes.

What do you do with your nose?

I smell.

Do you have a mouth?

Yes.

What do you do with your mouth?

I partake of the victuals and beverages.

Do you have a tongue also?

Yes, I do.

What do you do with it?

I speak with the help of my tongue.

Do you have ears?

Yes.

What do you do with your ears?

I listen to sounds.

What about hands? Do you have hands too?

Yes, I do.

What is the use of your hands?

I accomplish heavy works with their help. I feel the softness and hardness of a thing by touching with them.

Do you have legs also?

Yes I do.

What benefit do they give you?

I go from one place to another by the help of them.

All right, tell me do you have a heart?

Yes, I do.

When you have all the apparent parts of your body, then what do you do with your heart?

With the help of my heart, I judge their acts and their effects upon my body and senses.

Is it not possible that these parts of your body were not in need of a heart as all parts of your body were already in good condition?

No, how it is possible that a human being be without a heart?

A human being who is well and all parts of his body function properly, is no longer in need of a heart.

O son, what happens if these parts of the body may be misled in doing their duties or their actions maybe doubtful. For example; if the sense of smelling may not be clear regarding what it has smelled; or the eye regarding whatever it has seen; likewise the sense of taste regarding whatever it has tasted or the ear regarding whatever it has heard; and likewise the sense of touch regarding whatever it has touched. Then they consult with the heart and the heart which is like the capital of a country, checks and judges and puts that doubt aside.

(Hesham says: when the discussion reached this point, I said to Amr):

Therefore, the necessity of the heart for maintaining and managing the realm of the human body is a must. So, God had created the heart of the human being to manage the affairs of the realm of the human body, otherwise the parts of the body would not discharge their duties correctly and would have committed mistakes. Isn't that so?

I said: "O, Aba Marwan,[40] how is this possible? The Almighty Creator who has not left your body without any guide, to adjust their actions and help them to perform their duties correctly, has put a leader namely the heart, in the body. He has done that so that they may not be bewildered and every one of them may understand its own duty. Do you think He has left His servants free to be bewildered and live in dispute and discord without appointing any leader enabling them to solve their problems and free themselves from doubt and confusion?"

(Hesham says): Amr ibn Obeid became silent after hearing these words and fell into deep thought. He turned to me after a few moments and asked: Are you Hesham! Hesham ibn Hakam!?

No.[41]

Are you one of his friends and comrades?

No.

Where are you from then?

An inhabitant of Kufa.

Then certainly you are that very Hesham! Then he stood up, embraced me and seated me near himself. While we were sitting there, he was in deep thought as before and did not say anything.

Younus ibn Yaqub says: "When Hesham narrated this story, Imam [a] smiled and asked: 'O Hesham, who has taught you this way and style of debate and speech?'"

He replied: "Likewise I just uttered it, and whatever I have learnt, it is from your good self!"

Imam [a] said: "By God, this debate has been written in the same manner in Sohaf Abraham [a] and Sohaf Musa [a]"[42] (The Treatise of Abraham and the treatise of Moses).

[39] According to the writing of Abdoh al-Shami in his book - The History of Arab Philosophy, -'Amr ibn Ubaid was one of the learned men of the Abbasid period and was among the sincerest friends of Mansour Dawanighi and one of the chiefs of Moatazalah sect. The followers of the Moatazalah sect were famous as the supporters of Abbasid caliphate, because most of their beliefs conformed to the opinions of Abbasids and the enemies of Bani Umayyah. And on the other hand they did not respect and honour the household of the Prophet [s].

[40] Aba Marwan is the epithet of Amr ibn Ubaid. Epithet is a kind of title, generally used among Arabs. They add "Ab" (father) at the beginning of a name of a man and Um (mother) at the beginning of a name of a woman as, Abul Hasan and Um Kulthum.

[41] For the sake of dissimulation, Hesham avoided to disclose his name.

[42] This story is translated with a slight change in it, from the book - "Al-Kafi", vol.1. Pg. 169. The honoured writer, Kulayni has quoted from Ali ibn Ibrahim, who narrated from his father Hasan b. Ibrahim and he heard from Younus ibn Yaqub; and likewise in the book - Rejal- Kashi, have been quoted in the same manner - Najaf, Pg. 232.

The Debate of Hesham with the chief of the Kharajites (Khawarej)

Hesham, who was never defeated in debates, was a universal champion and his fame spread every where. He was always victorious over his opponents in every debate. Every one was anxious to witness his debates. Haroon, the most powerful caliph of the time, who was to a certain extent among the opponents, was also more anxious than others to watch the discussion and the speech of Hesham.

So one day, he ordered Yahya ibn Khaled, his minister to arrange a meeting and put Hesham face to face with Abdullah ibn Yazid Abazi,[43] the chief of the Kharajites,[44] who was also one of the famous learned men of the time. The caliph also sat in a secret place behind the curtain in such a manner that he was able to listen to their discussions clearly but they could not see him.

Then the caliph ordered Yahya ibn Khaled Barmaki to ask Abdullah to put forth his questions to Hesham. Yahya, by the order of Haroon, turned his face to Abdullah and said: "Put forth your questions to Aba Muhammad, Hesham." Hesham (by taking this opportunity) said: "The Khawarej have no right to ask us about anything."

Abdullah -Why is this so?

Hesham - Because you were the people who first believed as we did in the justice of the man (i.e. Amirul Mu'mineen Ali [a], his Imamate and virtue, and then separated yourself from us and initiated intrigues and enmity with him. As we still have the same belief, so your first faith and agreement is a proof for us; your later opposition and enmity does not harm us and your arrogation is not accepted as an injury to us. This is so because the contradiction made after acceptance is not effective, your witnessing as an enemy of mine is acceptable if it is useful to me as your enemy. But if it is harmful to me as your enemy it is unacceptable.

Yahya ibn Khaled - O Hesham, you have almost defeated Abdullah and have brought him to the verge of defeat at the edge of a cliff. However, treat him moderately, as the caliph wants you to continue the discussion with him (although he did not hint at all that the caliph was present behind the curtain).

Hesham - I am ready for debate, but there is a difficult point. The point is that it may be

possible that our discussion may be lengthy and reach a place where there may occur some problems and complications and both of us may not accept the reality due to obstinacy, enmity and the critical nature of the topic. If it is advisable then appoint someone as a judge between us so that he may he able to make us return at the time of our deviation from the right path.

Abdullah - By God, Abu Muhammad (Hesham) has suggested a just proposal.

Hesham - Now, that it is time to appoint a referee; who should be this referee and a follower of which religion? Should he be one of my supporters or one of your friends? Should he oppose both of our beliefs or be opposed to the Muslim community and Islam?

Abdullah - You should select anyone whom you like, because you are a just man and I am satisfied with your selection.

Hesham - In my opinion it is a difficult task because if that judge comes from among my supporters then you will not be safe from his party spirit; and if he comes from among your supporters then I may not be safe. On the contrary, if he is from among the opponents and against both of our beliefs, then none of us may be safe from the harm of his unjustified arbitration. Then it is advisable that one man from each side oversees our speech; and witnesses our discussion and debate and arbitrates according to justice and fairness.

Abdullah - Very well, it is a just suggestion and I was also expecting the same from you.

Then, Hesham turned his face towards Yahya and said: "O Vizir (minister) be a witness that I have disapproved of his reasoning and have condemned him and have made him helpless. He has nothing to say anymore and I also do not need to debate with him."

Haroon shook the curtain and said to Yahya: "What does this Shia (Mutakallem) theologian say? He is still discussing with Abdullah about the rules and regulations, and the introduction of the topic. He has not yet started the actual debate. How he is claiming that he has condemned him and discarded his religion? Ask Hesham to prove his claim."

Yahya turned his face towards Hesham and said: "Amirul Mu'mineen (Haroon) orders you to prove the truth of your claim and explain how have you condemned this learned man and nullified the Kharajite sect?

Hesham - Is it not true that in the beginning these Kharajites were of the same opinion as we were concerning the matter of Imamate and the Wilayah of Amirul Mu'mineen [a], until the problem of the arbitration occurred in the Battle of Siffin? They acted rudely and shamelessly towards Amirul Mu'mineen [a] and called him an infidel because of the acceptance of the arbitration although they themselves compelled him (Hazrat) to accept this matter. Now this

learned man who is himself respectable and reliable among his followers, has accepted the arbitration and judgement of the two men without any compulsion and force - one of these two men is my follower who is an infidel according to his Khawarijite belief and the other is his own supporter. Both of them have different beliefs and are opposed to each other. Now if he is right in choosing the arbitration and has chosen the right path, then there is no cause for him to criticize Amirul Mu'mineen [a] who is more worthy and wise. And if he has made a mistake then he is himself an infidel and his wickedness does not harm us. He has given evidence of his own infidelity. So first it is most necessary to check out his infidelity and his faith, enabling us to see whether he is himself an infidel or a Muslim. This is necessary before checking his opinion regarding the matter of the infidelity of Ali [a].

When the discussion of Hesham reached this point, Haroon became uneasy because of the clear reasoning and knockout proofs of Hesham. But he was so enchanted by his speech that he involuntarily applauded him and ordered to give him a reward. It is to be noted that Hesham was skilful in the practical sciences, and it is a fact that his discussions and speeches have been completely based upon intellectual, philosophical and theological reasoning in addition, as we noticed in the above story, he has used his own particular technique and has defeated his opponents.

[43] In some books, the name of the father of Abdullah has been recorded as Zayd, which is apparently wrong.

[44] Kharajites area group of people who were at first the followers of Imam Ali [a] and Shias. Then at the Battle of Siffin, due to the insistence of the army, the problem of arbitration occured. According to this, one person from Mu'awiyah's side and one person from Imam Ali's [a] side should be appointed and whatever they announced, all other people should obey their decision. Contrary to the desire of Amirul Mu'minin, Abu Musa Ashary was appointed from Ali's side and Amr As from Mu'awiyah's side was appointed for this purpose. After some time Amr As cheated him cleverly and cunningly and the story ended in favour of Mu'awiyah. As a result of this trickery a group came out as opponents against Ali [a] and said: Ali [a], because you accepted the arbitration of Mu'awiyah and Amr As who were infidels, we do not accept you anymore. Their slogan was: "There is no verdict except that of Allah." At last Ibn Muljim, who was one of them, killed Ali [a].

God is Omnipotent

One day, the famous learned materialist of Hesham's time, Abdullah Deisani asked him: Do you believe there is a Creator?

Hesham replied: Yes

Deisani - Is He omnipotent?

Hesham - He is overwhelmingly powerful.

Deisani - Can He put the whole world in an egg in such away that neither the egg becomes bigger nor the world smaller?

Hesham - (As he saw that he had no forceful answer, he asked for time): Give me sometime for the answer.

Deisani - You have one year's time.

Hesham decided to go on a journey. He rode on a horse and reached Imam al-Sadiq [a]. He asked for permission to enter. He was given the permission. He entered and said respectfully: O son of the Prophet [s], Abdullah Deisani has asked me a question and I am not able to answer him. Except for you and God, there is no one who can solve it.

Imam al-Sadiq [a]- What is the question?

Hesham gave the details of the matter.

Imam al-Sadiq [a]- O Hesham, how many physical senses do you have?

Hesham - Five.

Imam al-Sadiq [a] Which is the smallest of them?

Hesham - My eye.

Imam Al-Sadiq [a] -What is the size of the lens of your eyes?

Hesham - It is just like a lentil or even smaller than that.

Imam Al-Sadiq [a] -Look around you and above your head and tell me what do you see there?

Hesham - I see the sky, the earth, houses, forests, hills and rivers.

Imam Al-Sadiq [a]: He, who is capable of putting all these things, which you are seeing, in a very small lentil or less than that, can also put the whole world in an egg, such that neither the world becomes smaller nor the egg bigger.

Hesham put his face on the ground and kissed the hands and feet of the Imam and said: This is enough for me: and he returned to his own house.

The next day, Deisani came to him and said: I have only come to say hello to you. I wanted to know about your welfare. I have not come for the answer to my question.

Hesham said: If you have come for the answer to your question, then I have your answer.

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Debate of Hesham with Nazzam

Although it is clear in the Qur'an and it is also found in most of the Qur'anic verses and traditions from the household of the Prophet [s] that dwellers in the Paradise and the Hell will remain there forever. Words like "Khaledoon", "Khaledeen and Mokhallad" (all meaning eternity) and other derivations of this term which have been used in the Qur'an and clearly give the same meaning. Nazzam was opposed to the idea of the eternity of Heaven and Hell. That is he was of the opinion that the pious men and the dwellers of Paradise and the evil doers of Hell will not remain there forever.

One day, Nazzam happened to meet Hesham at a meeting and discussed with him about this matter, the details of which are as follows:

Nazzam - If the dwellers of Paradise will live eternally in the Paradise, then in this way, they will have life and eternity like God and they will also remain until God exists. Such a thing is impossible.

Hesham - The eternal stay of the dwellers of the Paradise originates from God and by His order. It is He who bestows this eternal life to them. This is different from the Eternity of the Creator, because God is self-existing and His existence is self-characteristic, but the existence of the dwellers of Paradise is due to Him.

Nazzam - He repeated his first question and insisted that the eternity of the heavenly people and the matter of Kholood (eternity) is impossible.

So for Hesham there was no way but to set forth so many questions.

Hesham asked him - So what will be their ultimate fate?

Nazzam - Suddenly everyone in Paradise will feel some kind of sudden faintness and unconsciousness.

Hesham - You have not read the Qur'an or else you have read it but have not understood where it points out: "Whatever a man will wish for in the Paradise, will be given to him." Therefore, if the heavenly people would request eternal life, do you think that the Almighty God would not fulfil His promise and He would not accept their demands?

Nazzam - God will not allow him to think of such thing, and this type of thought will not occur to them and as a result they will not ask for such a thing.

Hesham - If a heavenly body sees fruits on a tree and stretches his hand out to pick it and at the same time the fruit of another tree attracts him and he also stretches his other hand to grasp that. And suddenly while both his hands are stretched in between the branches of the trees, as you say, the unconsciousness will overcome them and their hands will become senseless and in that condition they will be left hanging between two trees. It seems that the heavenly people have been left hanging! Therefore, so much for your belief that unconsciousness will suddenly overcome them and this type of situation will follow the heavenly people forever!!!.

Nazzam - It is impossible! It is impossible! That such a thing will happen.

Hesham - O' Nazzam, your idea is wrong and your false belief is more absurd. Do you think that a group of persons, who have been created and assigned to live for sometime in Paradise on the basis of their goodness, will be destroyed? It is a matter of fallacious thinking and ignorance and I wonder about you. You are so ignorant!!

The Divine Help

Hesham, by the help of his personal talent, bravery and special boldness, used to stand against the opponents of Wilayah and Imamate and defend the Prophet's chaste household without any fear and anxiety. It was because of this obstinacy and intrepidity that the caliph had decided several times to kill him and at last due to anxiety, fear and serious heart trouble, Hesham sacrificed his life.

Among his bold debates, there is a story which is quoted by Allamah Mohsen Amin as follows:

One day, Yahya ibn Khaled Barmaki, the minister, asked Hesham in the presence of the caliph Haroon al Rashid - Tell us, is it possible that a right cause happens to face opposition from two sides and that the beliefs of two persons who are quite different to each other (like two poles) may be right or that both of their opinions may be correct?

Hesham: It is impossible.

Yahya: If two persons have different opinions regarding one and the same religious matter, is it possible that both of them may be right or both of them wrong?

Hesham: The reply of this question is also clear according to the previous answer. It is not possible that both parties may be right. This sort of thing is impossible and certainly one of them may be right and the other wrong.

Yahya: (to put Hesham in an awkward position and provoke the wrath of Haroon he said) So, O' Hesham, when Ali ibn Abi Taleb and Abbas[45] ibn Abdul Mutallib had disputes about the inheritance of the post of caliphate, and put the arbitration before Abubakr*: Who was right and who was wrong.

Hesham (He thought to himself that if he would say that Ali was in the wrong, he would become an infidel and would have exceeded the bounds of religion. If he would say that Abbas's claim was futile and he was in the wrong, then Haroon would order immediately to kill him. This was an unusual problem and till that day this type of discussion had not happened and he had no ready answer for this question before hand.)

Hesham thought of the sayings of Imam Al-Sadiq [a] who used to say: "Till you defend our cause by the help of your speech, you will be favoured by the Holy Spirit." So I became hopeful and understood that I would not be condemned, insulted or defeated. Suddenly a reply occurred to me I said: Neither Ali [a] nor Abbas was mistaken and neither of them was in the wrong. Rather both of them were right and their difference was not an actual difference and they had no conflict between themselves, but apparently it seemed like that. Their story is just like those two angels of the heaven who are mentioned in the Qur'an and they took their dispute to Hazrat Dawood [a]. So which angel was right and which one had made a mistake? Or would you say that both of them were wrong? Whatever would be your answer regarding that matter; my answer would be the same regarding Ali [a] and Abbas.

Yahya: In my opinion, neither of these angels made a mistake rather both of these angels were right. In fact, they had no dispute and the exposition of their difference was only to attract the attention of Hazrat Dawood [a] and to let him know of the Decree of God.

Hesham: Therefore, I would say regarding Ali [a] and Abbas that they had no dispute concerning the matter of caliphate and in fact both of them were of one and the same opinion. Their retelling of the dispute was only to inform the caliph (Abubakr) about his mistake and their action was similar to the action of those angels.

Yahya gave no answer at all. He was looking at Haroon amazed and ashamed. The caliph who was very much impressed by Hesham's attractive speech, applauded and praised him.

[45] Abbas was the uncle of the Prophet [s] and the ancestor of all Abbaside Caliphs including Haroon, and for this reason, this dynasty of Islamic Caliphate is called Abbasides

The debate which became the cause of the death of Hesham

That very day, Baghdad witnessed the most sensational struggle of the champion of speech Hesham ibn Hakam - the debate between truth and falsehood, the interesting and hilarious debate!

Yes, it was a wonderful scene. The scene ended in Hesham's victory as usual, but it was so much a cause of unrest for Haroon that when he came out of the meeting, he was extremely irritated and had become just like a wounded wild animal. Upon leaving the meeting Haroon uttered some aminous threats such as: By God, I will kill him. Who was he? By God, I will kill him! I will make him burn in fire!

Hazrat Abdul Azim[46] Hasani quotes: "Haroon al-Rashid said to Ja'far ibn Yahya Barmaki: I would like you to gather all speculative theologians (orators) at a meeting and have them discuss on the subjects concerning themselves. I will hide myself in a place where they will not be able to see me but where I will be able to hear their speeches and listen to their disagreements. Yahya ibn Khaled fulfilled the caliph's order and asked the speculative theologians to gather at his home and he decorated a place for the caliph, a bit removed from their sight.

The caliph and a huge number of speculative theologians gathered together and were waiting for Hesham ibn Hakam. Hesham suddenly entered the meeting. He paid respect to all the people present and did not pay any attention to Ja'far Barmaki. In the meantime, some one in the gathering asked him:

O' Hesham, why do you think Ali [a] is more pious than Abu Bakr? God says: "The second one of them (i.e. the Prophet [s] and Abu Bakr hid themselves in the cave "Thaur" on the night of migration) said to his friend: Don't be sad, God is with us."

Hesham: O' man, tell me, why was Abu Bakr sad? Was God happy and pleased about his sadness or was He not pleased? That man remained silent and avoided giving an answer.

Hesham: If you think, God was pleased about the sadness of Abu Bakr, then why did the Apostle of God tell him not to be sad. Did the Prophet [s] prohibit him from committing the acts to please God? If you deem, God was not pleased with the grief of Abu Bakr, then can you be proud of a thing which was contrary to that of God's pleasure. O' man you yourself

know better what God has said in their respect: Thus the Creator sent His peace and tranquillity to His Prophet and believers"[47]

(It is obvious that this verse of the Qur'an does not prove any superiority of Abu Bakr. Whereas a group of Sunni learned men have taken this verse as a token of honour and virtue for the caliph there is a reference to another verse of the Qur'an which notes clearly: "Thus the creator sent down His peace and tranquillity on His Apostle."[48] This is the clear proof that the above verse is not related to Abu Bakr rather the pronoun in the verse of the cave refers to the Holy Prophet.[49]

Then Hesham turned towards that man and said: "You have quoted traditions and we have also quoted the Prophet that paradise is waiting to receive four persons: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Miqdad ibn Aswad, Ammar Yaser and Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari. The name of our lord Ali ibn Abi Taleb has been referred to in the tradition, but the name of your respectful Abu Bakr is not among them. So the superiority of Ali to Abu Bakr is indisputable.

Similarly, you have said and we also believe and the people also say. There are four persons who have defended the sanctity of Islam: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Zubair ibn Awam, Abu Dajjanah Ansari and Salman Farsi. Here, the name of our Imam is at the top but your leader is deprived of this honour too. So for this reason, we prefer our leader to yours.

Similarly, you believe and we have also said and every one says that there are four reciters of the Qur'an from the Prophet's period:

Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Abdullah Masoud, Ali ibn and Zayd ibn Thabet. Ali ibn Abi Taleb has been given this honour but Abu Bakr is not graced by this virtue. For this reason, we prefer Ali to him.

Moreover, you have quoted and we, shias have also quoted and other people are also in agreement with us that there are four sacred and purified persons: Ali ibn Abi Taleb [a], Fatimah [a], Hasan [a] and Husayn [a]. The lofty place of our leader Ali ibn Abi Taleb is seen among those exalted people also but your leader is deprived of this virtue here too. So for this reason Ali [a] is preferred over Abu Bakr.

Furthermore, you and others have said and we have also quoted that there are four pious and good men: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Fatimah, Hassan and Husayn [a]. The name of our respected leader is among them but the name of your leader is not found there. This is the reason that we consider our leader to be more able and count him higher than others.

And after all, you have narrated and we have also quoted and other people also say the same thing that there are four martyrs on the right path: Ali ibn Abi Taleb, Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb, Hamzah and Obaidullah ibn Harith. It is obvious that the name of our spiritual leader is at the

top of the list of the Martyrs on the Right Path and he is the leader of the martyrs, but Abu Bakr is deprived of this virtue also. For this reason we prefer Ali to others. Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani says: Haroon who was carefully listening to the speech of Hesham, suddenly put the curtain aside and Ja'far also asked the people to leave the house. All of them in a very frightened state went out. Haroon also left the meeting furiously as he was uttering:

"Who was he? By God, I will kill him and make him burn in fire."

[46] Hazrat Abdul Azim ibn Abdullah ibn Ali. Zaid ibn Hasan ibn Hasan Mujtaba [a]. the exalted son, his burial place is at the city of Rey which is a sacred visiting place for shias. Sheikh Mufid has quoted this story in his book Ekhtesas, with reference to that holy man.

[47] A part of verse No. 40 of Surah Taubah.

[48] Surah 9. verse 40.

[49] Surah 48, verse 26.

The Cause of the Death of Hesham

The fame of Hesham had spread everywhere and people used to come from every corner of the world in groups to listen and witness the fascinating debates.

Haroon who was very much annoyed and alarmed by the matter considered the speeches of Hesham as the biggest danger to the caliphate, and had decided several times to kill Hesham. He had warned him of his death, especially on that very day when Yahya ibn Khaled had arranged the meeting by the order of Haroon and he had listened to the convincing speech of Hesham personally and had sworn to kill him.

At last he called for Hesham and ordered to imprison and kill him. So, Hesham had to escape to Kufa and hid away for some time in the house of Bashir Nabbal where he was too ill. However much they asked him to see a doctor he would refuse saying: I shall die and shall not recover from this illness. Finally Bashir brought a few doctors. When they finished their examinations Hesham asked them about his illness.

Some of them said: We do not know what the illness is, and others told him something else as a result of their examinations. Hesham said: You are telling a lie; my illness is due to my heart trouble which is affected by the fear I have. It cannot be treated.

After a time, he died of the same heart illness in 379 A.H. in Kufa. At the time of his death, he made his will to take out his corpse at night after bathing and shrouding and put a note on his coffin which noted that: This is Hesham ibn Hakam. This was done so that the couflien of the caliph would know that he has died and free from prison those who were arrested due to being his relatives.

When the news of his death reached Haroon, he said: "Thank God, I got rid of his mischief."

When the news of the death of Hesham was brought to the 8th Imam [a], he prayed to God for his forgiveness and said: A great pillar of defence for Wilayah and Imamate has vanquished. [50] Hazrat Jawad al-Aimma [a] also used to say about him that: God may bless him as he used to endeavor to clarify the doubts of the opponents and defend our right cause and faith.

The date of Hesham's death is also not free from ambiguity and controversy. Some have written[51] that Hesham died in 179 A.H. in Kufa during the caliphate of Haroon al-Rashid

and others have thought his date of death to be 188 A.H.[52] and other writers as 199 A.H. [53]

This was the brief story of the life and bold debates of Hesham, his defence of the cause of Wilayah and Imamate and his ultimate fate. Countless blessings be showered upon his sacred soul and all followers and searchers of the Truth! Now we will finish this book with Hesham's own prayer as quoted by Younus ibn Yaqub. Hesham always prayed as follows:

O' Creator bestow upon us the reward for the necessary or unnecessary deeds we have done or will perform in the future which are according to the commands of your Apostle and his sacred household [s]. (Peace be upon him and all of them according to the merit). O God, accept all these deeds from them and us and bestow upon us the blessing according to your own lofty and proper dignity.

[50] Ghahramanan e Islam, Heroes of Islam by. Mr. Ali Akbar Tashaiod, vol.2.

[51] Rejal, by Abu Umar Kashi, quoted through Fazl ibn Shazan.

[52] Al Fehrest, by Ibn Nadim.

[53] (Ayan- al- Shiah)